

# The Choices We Make

## Big Thoughts in a COVID-19 World

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Well, it's over. Months of ads on TV, signs in yards, verbal wrangling. Finally, the election is over. And yet it is not. America was called to make a decision, as it has been called every four years – a decision to determine who would lead it. We've done it for literally hundreds of years now, and yet this one seems different – a little more existential.

Funny that this past weekend was also when the final chapter of the Book of Joshua came up as the Old Testament reading. For those unfamiliar with Joshua, he's the guy that led the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land after Moses died.

Joshua was a powerful leader and a mighty warrior, and after years of fighting to create the nation God had promised, his days were nearly through. But he had one more piece of business to complete. In Chapter 23 an aging Joshua gathered “all Israel, their elders and heads, their judges and officers,” and addressed them, the gist being: look at all God has done for you. If you continue to be faithful, God will remain faithful – but be careful, because if you let your guard down, things will not go well – quite the opposite as a matter of fact. It wasn't a threat: it was a statement of truth.

But the real business was conducted in Chapter 24. Joshua called the entire nation together to make a decision – one that would determine the course of the nation for years to come. Sound familiar? In Joshua's time the decision was whether the nation of Israel would serve God, and God alone, or the false gods and idols of their ancestors.

Joshua reminded them that without God they would have nothing, and then in a scene right out of Braveheart, he challenges the Israelites, saying, “Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (v15, NRSV). Let's just say he carried the day, the Israelites committed to serving The One God.

But remember, committing doesn't always mean success; it only means they'll try. We know that they will fail, often. Foreign Gods, false idols, distractions that lead them astray. They would pay for it. Fortunately, we don't have to worry about false and foreign gods, do we? If only that were true.

Each and every one of us have so many foreign gods in our lives: money, relationships, possessions, politics and personal beliefs. Positions we have held for years, fully assured that we are right. False idols, things that we place above our commitment to God, even if we carry those things in the name of God. Those are the choices we make.

And so an election has been held, a decision has been made. A controversial decision to be sure, but the results seem clear. And yet, decision made, we remain a nation divided. Divided along party lines, racial lines, and even religious lines. And yet we call ourselves “One Nation Under God.” What a mess we've made for ourselves.

What if, instead of fighting for the higher ground or our particular version of moral ground, we commit to finding common ground – to serving God. How about we put God first? Not party politics, not personal preferences, but the common ground of a commitment to serve God, seeking God's justice for the good of all – that's is God's expressed will.

So here we are, choices have been made – to the delight of some, and the disgust of others. Many other choices remain in the days ahead – will this nation, will our democracy, “the land of the free, and the home of the brave” have the courage to choose to serve God, or will we pursue the falseness of division?

No, we won't make the right choices all the time, we are only human after all. Fortunately, the future doesn't rest in our sinful hands. No, the future ultimately depends on God -- God's faithfulness, God's mercy, God's powerful word, God's transformation of our hearts. God's saving grace. That's who God is. We can do better America. Stay well, think big. Amen.

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